

THE DREAM OF THE BARLEY CAKE

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when Gideon had come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand has God delivered Midian, and all the host.”
Judges 7:13, 14.

THE Midianites were devastating the land of Israel. These wandering tribes purposely kept away during the times of plowing and sowing, and allowed the helpless inhabitants to dream that they would be able to gather in a harvest, but no sooner did there come to be anything eatable by man or beast, than these Bedouin hordes came up like locusts, and devoured everything. Imagine a country like Israel, which had at one time been powerful, so greatly reduced as to be unable to keep off these desert rangers, brought so low that the cities and villages were empty, and the inhabitants were hidden in the hill sides, in the watercourses, and in the huge caverns of the rocks. God had forsaken them for their sins, and therefore their own manhood had forsaken them, and they hid themselves from enemies, whom, in better days, they had despised.

In her extremity, the guilty nation began to cry to Jehovah her God, and the answer was not long delayed. An angel came to Gideon and announced to him that the Lord had delivered Midian into his hand, and that he should smite them as one man. Gideon was a man of great faith; his name shines among the heroes of great faith in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and you and I will do well if we attain to the same rank in the peerage of faith as he did. But for all that, the best of men are men at the best, and men of strong faith are often men of strong conflicts, and so it was with Gideon. This man's great faith and great weakness of faith both showed themselves in a desire for signs. Once assure him that God is with him, and Gideon has no fear, but hastens to the battle, bravest of the brave. With a handful of men, he is quite prepared to go against a host of adversaries, but he pines for a sign. Again and again he asks it. The anxious question seems to be constantly recurring to him, “Is the Lord with us? If the Lord is with us, where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” Hence his frequent prayer is, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, show me a sign.” He began with this, and this ill beginning colored his whole career. I have known many persons like this son of Joash, they say, “Let me but know that God is with me, and my fear is gone,” but their repeated question is, “Is the Lord with me? Is Jesus mine, and am I His? Let me but know that I am a true believer, and I am sure that I shall not perish, for God will not forsake His own, but then, am I a believer? Have I the marks and evidences of a child of God?” Hence the practice of severe self-examination, and hence also the weakening habit of craving for tokens and feelings. How many are crying “We see not our signs,” when they ought to say, “But we see Jesus!” How many are praying, “Show me a token for good,” when the Lord Jesus has given Himself for them, and has thereby given the best token of His grace!

So it happened to Gideon, that the Lord knowing his hunger for signs and yet knowing the sincerity of his faith, bade him, on the night of the great battle which was to rout Midian, go down as a spy into the camp with his servant, and there Gideon would receive a token for good, which would effectually quiet all his fears.

I picture Gideon and his attendant creeping down the hill in the stillness of the night, when the camp was steeped in slumber. It was about the end of the first watch, when they were soon to change sentinels.

The two brave men, with stealthy footsteps, drew near the pickets, and even passed them. From long habit they had learned to make no more sound with their footsteps than if they had been cats. As they move along they come near to a couple of men who are talking together, and they listen to their conversation. Whether they were inside the tent, lying on their beds, or whether they were sitting by the campfire whiling away the last half-hour of their weary watch, we do not know, but there they were, and Gideon remained breathless to hear their talk. One of them told his fellow that he had dreamed a dream, and he began the telling of it. Then the other ventured an interpretation, and Gideon must have been awe-stricken when he heard his own name mentioned, and his own success foretold. Do you not see him with streaming eyes and clasped hands silently worshipping God? His assurance overflows, and motioning to his servant, they steal away through the shadows, and quietly ascend the hill to the place where the little band of three hundred lay in hiding. They look down upon the sleeping camp, and Gideon cries, "The Lord has delivered into your hands the hosts of Midian." Obedient to their leader they descend with their trumpets, and with torches covered with pitchers. At a signal they break the pitchers, display the lights, and sound the trumpets, and shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Imagining that a vast army is upon them, the tribes of the desert run for their lives, and in the darkness, fall foul of one another. Midian is scattered, Israel is free.

In quiet contemplation let us now play the part of spies. With all our wits about us let us thread our way among the sleepers, and listen to this dream and the interpretation thereof.

I. The first thing that I shall bring under your observation is THE STRIKING PROVIDENCE which must have greatly refreshed Gideon. Just as he and Phurah stealthily stole up to the tent, the Midianite was telling a dream, bearing an interpretation so appropriate to Gideon. It may appear to be a little thing, but an occurrence is none the less wonderful because it appears to be insignificant. The microscope reveals a world of marvels quite as surprising as that which is brought before us by the telescope. God is as divine in the small as in the stupendous, as glorious in the dream of a soldier as in the flight of a seraph.

Now observe, first, the providence of God *that this man should have dreamed just then*, and that he should have dreamed that particular dream. Dreamland is chaos, but the hand of the God of order is here. What strange romantic things our dreams are!—fragments of this, and broken pieces of the other, strangely joined together in absurd fashion—

*"How many monstrous forms in sleep we see,
That neither were, nor are, nor ever can be!"*

Yet observe that God holds the brain of this sleeping Arab in His hand, and impresses it as He pleases. Dreams often come of previous thoughts; see then the providence which had taken this man's mind to the hearth and the cake baking. The Lord prepares him when he is awake to dream aright when he is asleep. God is omnipotent in the world of mind as well as in that of matter, He rules it when men are awake, and does not lose His power when men fall asleep. The heathen ascribed dreams to their gods, we read of one, that—

*"Pallas poured sweet slumbers on his soul,
And balmy dreams, the gift of soft repose."*

Thin as the air, inconstant as the wind, the stuff that dreams are made of is vanity of vanities, and yet the Lord fashions it according to His own good pleasure. The man must dream, must dream then and there, and dream that dream which should convey confidence and courage to Gideon. Oh, believe it, God is not asleep when we are asleep; God is not dreaming when we are. I admire the providence of God in this, do not you? Is it not especially well ordered that this man shall dream, and therein declare a truth as deep as any in the compass of philosophy?

Further, I cannot but admire *that this man should be moved to tell his dream to his fellow*. It is not everybody that tells his dream at night, he usually waits till morning. We are grossly foolish sometimes, but we are not always so, and hence we do not hurry to tell such disjointed visions as that which this Arab had just seen. What was there in it? Many a time, no doubt, this son of the desert would have cried, "I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was." But this time he cannot shake it off. It burdens him, and he must tell it to his comrade by the campfire. Look into the face of Gideon as he catches every syllable. Now, if this dream-telling had been arranged by military authority, and if it had been part of a program that Gideon should be present in the nick of time to hear it, there would have

been a failure somehow or other. If the man had known that he had a listener, he might not have been punctual with his narrative, but he did *not* know a word about being overheard, and yet he was punctual to the tick of a clock. God rules men's idle tongues as well as their dreaming brains, and He can make a talkative soldier in the camp say just as much and just as little as will subserve the purposes of wisdom.

It is remarkable that *the man should tell his dream just when Gideon and Phurah had come near*. Just think a minute of the many chances against such a thing. We are on the side of the hill, and we glide down among the trees and the great rocks till we are nearly in the grasslands in the valley. Here lie the Midianites in their long lines of black tents, and the hush of deep slumber is over all, save where a few maintain a sleepy watch. Why does Gideon go to that particular part of the camp? Going there, why does he happen to drop on this particular spot where two men are talking? If he was spying out the camp, he would naturally wander along where there was most quiet, in order that he might not be discovered, for if the warriors had suddenly started up and snatched their spears these two men would have had small chance of life. It was singular that out of tents so countless Gideon should alight upon the very one in which were the two wakeful sentinels, and that he should come just as they were talking to one another about Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. Considering that there were fifty thousand other things that they might have talked of, and considering that there were fifty thousand other persons upon whom Gideon might have lighted, there were so many chances against Gideon's hearing that singular talk, that I do not hesitate to say, this is the finger of God. If this were but one instance of the accuracy of providence it might not so much surprise us, but history bristles with these instances. I mean not only public history, but our own private lives. Men sometimes make delicate machines where everything depends upon the touching of a certain pin at a certain instant, and their machinery is so arranged that nothing fails. Now, our God has so arranged the whole history of men, and angels, and the regions of the dead, that each event occurs at the right moment so as to influence another event, and that other event brings forth a third, and all things work together for good.

I think if I had been Gideon I would have said to myself, "I do not so much rejoice in what this dreamer says as I do in the fact that he has told his dream at the moment when I was lurking near him. I see the hand of the Lord in this, and I am strengthened by the sight. Verily, I perceive that the Lord works all things with unfailing wisdom, and fails not in His designs. He that has ordered this matter can order all other things." O child of God, when you are troubled it is because you fancy that you are alone, but you are not alone, the Eternal Worker is with you. Listen and you will hear the revolution of those matchless wheels which are forever turning according to the will of the Lord. These wheels are high and dreadful, but they move with fixed and steady motion, and they are all "full of eyes roundabout." Their course is no blind track of a car of Juggernaut, but the eyes see, the eyes look towards their end; the eyes look upon all that comes within the circuit of the wheels. Oh for a little heavenly eye salve to touch our eyes that we may perceive the presence of the Lord in all things! Then shall we see the mountain to be full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the prophets of the Lord. The stars in their courses are fighting for the cause of God. Our allies are everywhere. God will summon them at the right moment.

II. But now, secondly, I want to say something to you about THE COMFORTABLE TRIFLE which Gideon had thus met with. It was a dream, and therefore a trifle, or a nothing, and yet he took comfort from it. He was solaced by a dream, a gypsy's dream, and a poor dream at that. He took heart from an odd story of a barley cake which overturned a tent. It is a very curious thing that some of God's servants draw a very great deal of consolation from comparatively trivial things. We are all the creatures of sentiment as well as of reason, and hence we are often strongly affected by little things. Gideon is cheered by a dream of a barley cake. When Robert Bruce had been frequently beaten in battle, he despaired of winning the crown of Scotland, but when he lay hidden in the loft among the hay and straw, he saw a spider trying to complete her web after he had broken the thread many times. As he saw the insect begin again, and yet again, until she had completed her net for the taking of her prey, he said to himself, "If this spider perseveres and conquers, so will I persevere, and succeed." There might not be any real connection between a spider and an aspirant to a throne, but the brave heart made a connection, and thereby the man was cheered. If you and I will but look about us, although the adversaries of God are as many as grasshoppers, yet we shall find consolation. I hear the birds sing, "Be of good cheer," and the leafless

trees bid us trust in God and live on, though all visible signs of life are withered. If a dream was sufficient to encourage Gideon, an everyday fact in nature may equally serve the same purpose to us.

But what a pity it is that we should need such little bits of things to cheer us up, when we have matters of far surer import to make us glad! Gideon had already received, by God's own angel, the word, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall smite the Midianites as one man." Was not this enough for him? Where is it that a boy's dream comforts him more than God's own word? O child of God, how you degrade yourself and your Master's word, when you set so much store by a small token! Your Lord's promise—is that little in your eyes? What surer pledge of love do you desire than the blood of Jesus spilt for you? When Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," what more can you require? Is not the word of the Lord absolute truth? What seal do you need to the handwriting of God? The Lord may grant us further tokens for good, but we ought not to require them.

I have said that our gracious God does condescendingly grant us even trifles, when He sees that they will cheer us, and this, I think, calls for adoring gratitude, and also for practical use of this comfort. God grant us grace to do great things, as the result of that which to others may seem a trifle. Let us not make a sluggard's bed out of our tokens, but let us hasten to the fight as Gideon did. If you have received a gleam of comfort, hasten to the conflict before the clouds return, go to your consecrated labor before you have lost the fervor of your spirit. May the Holy Spirit lead you so to do.

III. I have been brief upon that point, because I want you to notice, thirdly, THE CHEERING DISCOVERY. Gideon had noticed a striking providence, he had received a comfortable trifle, but he also made a very cheering discovery, which discovery was, that the enemy dreamed of disaster. You and I sometimes think about the hosts of evil, and we fear we shall never overcome them, because they are so strong, and so secure. Listen, we overestimate them. The powers of darkness are not as strong as they seem to be. The subtlest infidels and heretics are only men. What is more, they are bad men, and bad men at bottom are weak men. You fret because in this war you are not angels, be comforted to think that the adversaries of the truth are men also. You sometimes grow doubtful; and so do they. You half despair of victory; and so do they. You are at times hard put to it; so are they. You sometimes dream of disaster; so do they. It is natural to men to fear, and doubly natural to bad men. It must have been a great comfort to Gideon to think that the Midianites dreamed about him, and that their dreams were full of terror to themselves. He did not think much of himself, he reckoned himself to be the least of all his father's house, and that his father's house was little in Israel, but the foes of Israel had taken another gauge of Gideon—they had evidently the notion that he was a great man whom God might use to smite them, and they were afraid of him. He that interpreted the dream made use of the name of, "Gideon, the son of Joash," evidently knowing a great deal more about Gideon than Gideon might have expected. "This," said the soldier, "is the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand has God delivered Midian, and all the host." Notice how his words tallied with those which the Lord had spoken to Gideon. The enemy had begun to dream, and to be afraid of him who now stood listening to their talk. A dread from the Lord had come upon them. Let us say to ourselves, "Why should we be afraid of sinners? They are afraid of us." A Christian man, the other day, was afraid to speak about his Lord to one whom he met. It cost him a deal of trouble to get his courage up to speak to a skeptic, but when he had spoken, he found that the skeptic had all along been afraid that he would be spoken to. It is a pity when we tremble before those who are trembling because of us. By lack of faith in God we make our enemies greater than they are.

Behold the host of doubters, and heretics, and revilers, who, at the present time, have come up into the inheritance of Israel, hungry from their deserts of rationalism and atheism! They are eating up all the corn of the land. They cast a doubt upon all the truths of our faith. But we need not fear them, for if we heard their secret counsels, we should perceive that they are afraid of us. Their loud blustering and their constant sneers are the index of real fear. Those who preach the cross of our Lord Jesus are the terror of modern thinkers. In their heart of hearts they dread the preaching of the old-fashioned gospel, and they hate what they dread. On their beds they dream of the coming of some evangelist into their neighborhood. What the name of Richard was to the Saracens that is the name of Moody to these boastful intellects. They wish they could stop those Calvinistic fellows and those evangelical old fogies. Brethren, so long as the plain gospel is preached in England there will always be hope that these brigands will yet be scattered, and the church be rid of their intrusion. Rationalism, Socinianism, Ritualism, and Universal-

ism will soon take to their legs, if the clear, decided cry of “the Sword of the Lord and of Gideon” be once more heard.

There is nothing of which a child of God need be afraid either on the earth or under it. I do not believe that in the lowest depths of hell we should hear or see anything that need make a believer in the Lord Jesus to be afraid. On the contrary, tidings of what the Lord has worked have made the enemy to tremble. Goodness wears in her innocence a breastplate of courage, but sin genders to cowardice. Those who follow after falsehood have a secret monitor within, which tells them that theirs is a weak cause, and that the truth must and will prevail over them. Let them alone, the beating of their own hearts will scare them. The Lord lives, and while He lives let none that trusts in His word suffer his heart to fail him, for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Our adversaries are neither so wise, nor so brave, nor as influential as we think them to be. Only have courage, and rely upon God, and you will overcome them. David, you need not fear the giant because of his size, the vastness of his shape will only make him an easier target for your smooth stone. His very bulk is his weakness, it were hard to miss so huge a carcass. Be not afraid, but run to meet him, the Lord has delivered him into your hand. Why should the servants of the Lord speak doubtfully when their God pledges His honor that He will aid them? Let us change our manner of speech, and say with the Psalmist, “Ascribe you strength unto God: His excellence is over Israel. Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee before Him.” We have received a kingdom which cannot be moved. We have believed the faith once delivered unto the saints, and we will display it as a banner because of the truth. Yet shall this song be sung in our habitations—“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.”

IV. Lastly, and most important of all, let us think for a little of THE DREAM ITSELF AND OF ITS INTERPRETATION.

The Midianite in his dream saw a barley cake. Barley cakes were not much valued as food in those days, any more than now. People ate barley when they could not get wheat, but they would need to be driven to such food by poverty, or famine. Barley meal was rather food for dogs or cattle than for men, and therefore the barley cake would be the emblem of a thing despised. A barley cake was generally made upon the hearth. A hole was made in the ground, and paved with stones, in this a fire was made, and when the stones were hot, a thin layer of barley meal was laid upon them, covered over with the ashes, and thus quickly and roughly baked. The cake itself was a mere biscuit. You must not interpret the dream as having in it a large loaf of barley bread, tumbling down the hill and smashing up the tent with its own weight. No, it was only a cake, that is to say, a biscuit, of much the same form and thinness as we see in the Passover cakes of the Jews. It may have been a long piece of thin crust, and it was seen in the dream moving onward and waving in the air something like a sword. It came rolling and waving down the hill till it came crashing against the pavilion of the prince of Midian, and turned the tent completely over, so that it lay in ruins. Perhaps driven by a tremendous wind, this flake of barley bread cut like a razor through the chief pole of the pavilion, and over went the royal tent. That was his vision, an odd, strange dream enough. His fellow answered, “The dream means mischief for our people. One of those barley-cake eaters from the hills will be upon us before long. That man Gideon, whom we have heard of lately, may fall upon us all of a sudden, and break down our power.” That was the interpretation; the barley biscuit the ruin of the pavilion.

Now, what we have to learn from it is just this, *God can work by any means*. He can never be short of instruments. For His battles He can find weapons on the hearth, weapons in the kneading trough, and weapons in the poor man’s basket. Omnipotence has servants everywhere. For the defense of His cause God can enlist all the forces of nature, all the elements of society, all the powers that be. His kingdom cannot fail, since the Lord can defend it even by the cakes which are baking upon the coals. Gideon, who threshes corn today, will thresh the Lord’s enemies tomorrow. Preachers of the word are being trained everywhere.

God can work by the feeblest means. He can use a cake which a child can crumble to smite Midian, and subdue its terrible power. Alas, sirs! We often consider the means to be used, and forget to go onward to Him who will use them. We often stop at the means, and begin to calculate their natural force, and thus we miss our mark. The point is to get beyond the instruments, to the God who uses the instru-

ments. I think I have heard that a tallow candle fired from a rifle will go through a door; the penetrating power is not in the candle, but in the force impelling it. So in this case, it was not the barley biscuit, but the almighty impulse which urged it forward, and made it upset the pavilion. We are nothing, but God with us is everything. "He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength."

By using weak means our Lord gets to Himself all the glory, and hides pride from men. The Lord had said to Gideon in the early part of this chapter, "The people are yet too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, My own hand has saved me." Their oppression was a punishment for sin, and their deliverance must be an act of mercy. They must be made to see the Lord's hand, and they cannot see it more clearly than by being delivered by feeble means. Out of jealousy for His own glory it often pleases God to set aside likely means and use those which we looked not for. Now I know how it is today, men think that if the world is to be converted it must be done by learned men, men of noble family, or at least of eminent talent. But is this the Lord's usual way? Is there anything in the Acts of the Apostles, or in the life of Christ, that should lead us to look to human wisdom, or talent, or prestige? Does not everything look in the opposite direction? The lake of Galilee was Christ's apostolic College. Has not God always acted upon His own declaration that He has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes? Is it not still true that the Lord has chosen the weak things of the world to confuse the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are? Are we not on the wrong track altogether when we look to men, and means, and measures, instead of considering the right hand of the Most High? Brethren, let us never forget that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings has the Lord ordained strength because of His enemies, that He might still the enemy and the avenger.

The Lord employs feeble means, that so He may have an opening for you and for me. If He used only the great, the wise, the strong, we should have to lie in the corner. Then might the men of one talent be excused for hiding it. But now the least among us may through God's grace aspire to usefulness. Brothers, let not your weakness keep you back from the Lord's work, you are at least as strong as barley cakes. I find that the original text suggests a noise, such as might be made by chestnuts or corn when roasting in the fire. The dreamer marked that it was a noisy cake which tumbled into the host of Midian. More noise than force, one would say. It was like a coal which flies out of the fire, makes a little explosion, and is never more heard of. Thus have many of God's most useful servants been spoken of at first. They were nine-day wonders, mere flashes in the pan, much ado about nothing, and so forth. And yet the Lord smites His enemies by their feeble means. My Brother, perhaps you have begun to make a little stir by faithfully preaching the gospel, and this has opened the mouths of the adversaries, who are indignant that such a nobody as you should be useful. "Why, there is nothing in the fellow, it is sheer impudence for him to suppose that he has any right to speak." Never mind. Go on with your work for the Lord. Cease not because you are of such small account, for by such as you are God is pleased to work.

Never are His adversaries so shamefully beaten as when the Lord uses feeble instrumentality. The Lord smote the hosts of Jabin by the hand of a woman, and the hosts of Philistia by the hand of Shamgar the plowman. It was to their everlasting reproach that the Lord put His foes to the rout with pitchers and trumpets in the hand of the little band that followed the threshers of Abiezer. The Lord will tread Satan under our feet shortly, even under *our* feet, which are less than the least of all saints.

Note, next, *God uses unexpected means*. If I wanted to upset a tent I certainly would not try to overturn it by a barley cake. If I had to cannonade an encampment I should not bombard it with biscuits. Yet how wonderfully, God has worked by the very persons whom we should have passed over without a thought. O Paganism, your gigantic force and energy, with Caesar at their head, shall be vanquished by fishermen from the Sea of Galilee! God willed it so, and so it was done. Papal Rome met as signal a downfall from reformers rude of speech and poor in estate. Expect the unexpected. Thus the Lord works to call men's attention to what He does. If He does what men commonly reckon upon, they take no notice of His doings, however splendid they may be in themselves; but if He steps aside, and does that which none could have looked for, then is their attention arrested, and they consider that the hand of the Lord is in it. Then also they admire and feel somewhat of awe of Him. For the tent to fall seems nothing, but for the tent to fall by being smitten with a barley cake is something to be marveled at. For souls to be

saved is in itself remarkable, but for them to be saved by some simple child-like evangelist who can scarcely speak grammatically, this is the talk of the town. For the Lord to call out a thief or a blasphemer and speak by his lips is a thing to make men feel the greatness of God. Then they cry, "How unsearchable are His ways!" For an error to be blasted and dried up is a blessed thing; and yet it is all the more miraculous when this is done, not by reasoning, nor by eloquent argument, but by the simple declaration of Gospel truth. O sirs, we never know what the Lord will do next. He can raise up defenders of the faith from the stones of the river. I despair not for the grand old cause. No, I hope against hope. Driven back as we may be, I see the very dust breeding warriors, and the grass of the field hardening into spears. Courage! Courage! Stand still, and see the salvation of God!

But the dream has more in it than this, *God uses despised means*. This man Gideon is likened to a cake, and then only to a barley cake, but the Lord styles him "a mighty man of valor." God loves to take men whom others despise, and use them for His glorious ends. "He is a fool," they say, "an uneducated man, one of the very lowest class of minds, he has no taste, no culture, no thought. He is not a person of the advanced school." My dear brother, I hope no one among you will be influenced by this kind of silly talk. The "mashers" in our churches talk in this fashion, but who cares for their proud nonsense? It is time that men who despise others should be themselves despised, and be made to know that they are so. Those who boast their intellect are of small account with God. The whole tenor of this inspired Book is that way, it speaks kindly of things that are despised, but it has no word of reverence for the boastful and pretentious. Therefore, you despised ones, let the proud unbelievers laugh at you, and sing concerning you their song of a barley cake, but you in patience possess your souls, and go on in the service of your Lord. They think to render you contemptible, but the scorn shall return upon the scorers. You shall yet by the Lord's strength have such force and vigor put into you, that you shall put to flight the armies of the aliens. Say you with Paul, "When I am weak then am I strong." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."

But, then, *God always uses effectual means*. This cake of barley bread came unto a tent and struck it, that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. The Lord never does His work by halves. Even if He works by barley cakes, He makes a clean overthrow of His enemy. A cannonball could not have done its work better than did this barley cake. Friend, if the Lord uses you for His own purpose, He will do His work by you as effectually and surely, as if He had selected the best possible worker. He lifts our weakness out of itself, and elevates it to a level of power and efficacy little dreamed of by us. Wherefore, be not afraid, you servants of God, but commit yourselves into the hands of Him who, out of weakness, can bring forth strength.

I have done when I have made an application of all this to certain practical purposes. Brethren, do you not think that this smiting of the tent of Midian by the barley cake, and afterwards the actual overthrow of the Midianite hordes by the breaking of the pitchers, the blazing of the torches, and the blowing of the trumpets, all tends to comfort us as to those powers of evil which now cover the world? I am appalled sometimes as I think of the power of the enemy, both in the matter of impurity and falsehood. At this present moment you seem as if you could do nothing, you cannot get in to strike a blow. Sin and error have so much the upper hand that we know not how to strike them. The two great parties in England, the Puritan and the Cavalier, take turns about, and just now the Cavalier rules most powerfully. At one time sound doctrine and holy practice had sway, but in these days loose teaching and loose living are to the fore. But our duty clearly lies in sticking to the word of the Lord and the gospel of our fathers. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. By this sign we shall conquer yet. The impurity of the age will never be cleansed except by the prevalence of the gospel, and the infidelity of the period will never die before any assault but that of the pure truth of the living Lord. We must tell of pardon bought with blood, of free forgiveness according to the riches of divine grace, and of eternal power changing fallen human nature, and making men new creatures in Christ Jesus. They call this a worn-out doctrine, let us put its power to the test on the largest scale, and we shall see that it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. As for me, I shall preach the gospel of the grace of God, and that only, even if I be left alone. The hosts of Israel are melting away, and they will melt much more. As in Gideon's day, out of the whole host twenty-two thousand have gone altogether away from true allegiance to the cause, and many more have no stomach for the fight. Let them go. The thou-

sands and the hundreds; let the thirty thousand who came at the trumpet call decrease to the three hundred men that lap in haste as a dog laps, because they are eager for the fray. When we are thinned out, and made to see how few we are, we shall be hurled upon the foe with a power not our own. Our weapon is the torch of the old gospel, flaming forth through the breaking of our earthen vessels. To this we add the trumpet sound of an earnest voice. Ours is the midnight cry, “Behold He comes!” We cannot get victory by any might or skill of ours, and yet in the end the foe shall be defeated, and the Lord alone shall be exalted. Were things worse than they are, we would still cry, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” and stand each man in his place till the Lord appeared in strength.

Another lesson would I draw from the text as to our inward conflicts. Dear friend, you are feeling in your heart the great power of sin. The Midianites are encamped in your soul, in the little valley of Esdraelon which lies within your bosom, there are countless evils, and these, like the locusts, eat up every growing thing, and cause comfort, and strength, and joy, to cease from your experience. You sigh because of these invaders. I counsel you to try what faith can do. Your own earnest efforts appear to make you worse; try faith. Neither tears, nor prayers, nor vows, nor self-denials, have dislodged the foe, try the barley cake of faith. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him you are saved, in Him you have power to become a child of God. Believe this and rejoice. Poor sinner! Try faith. Poor backslider! Try faith. Poor desponding heir of heaven! Try faith. This barley cake of faith will smite the power of sin and break the dominion of doubt, and bring you victory. Remember that ancient Scripture, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”? Make bold to believe. Say at once—

*“I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me.”*

This seems a very poor means of getting the victory, as poor as the barley cake baked on the coals, but God has chosen it, and He will bless it, and it will overthrow the throne of Satan within your heart, and work in you holiness and peace.

Once again, still in the same vein, let us, dear friends, try continually the power of prayer for the success of the gospel, and the winning of men’s souls. Prayer will do anything—will do everything. It fills the valleys and levels the mountains. By its power men are raised from the door of hell to the gate of heaven. What is to become of London? What is to become of heathen nations? I listen to a number of schemes, very visionary, and very hard to work out. But I put these aside. There remains to believers but one scheme; our Lord has said, “Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” This, therefore, we must do, and at the same time we must cry mightily unto God by prayer that His Holy Spirit may attend the proclamation of the Word. Let us more and more prove the power of prayer, resting assured that the Lord is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. Let each man stand with the flaming torch of truth in his hand, and the trumpet of the gospel at his lips, and so let us compass the army of the aliens. This is our war cry—Christ and Him crucified! God forbid that we should know anything else among men, but the death, the blood, the resurrection, the reign, the coming, the glory of Christ. Let us not lose faith in our calling, nor in our God, but rest assured that the Lord reigns and His cause must triumph. Where sin abounded grace does much more abound. We shall see better and brighter days than these. Grant it, O Lord, for Your Son’s sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JUDGES 6:1-21, 36-40; 7:7-15.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—92 (PART 1), 674, 686.**

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